



Department
for Transport

Rt Hon George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Andrew Jones MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: andrew.jones@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 15 July to Michael Gove, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, _____ of _____ about taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) refusing to carry passengers with assistance dogs. Your letter has been passed to this Department and I am replying as Minister responsible for this issue.

The Government is committed to ensuring that disabled people have the same access to transport services and opportunities to travel as other members of society. We recognise that both taxis and PHVs are a particularly valuable form of transport for people with disabilities, due to their door to door nature.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a legal requirement for all taxi and PHV drivers to carry assistance dogs and not to charge more for doing so. There is a similar duty on PHV operators accepting bookings. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in prosecution and a fine on conviction of up to £1,000.

The Department has issued guidance to both local licensing authorities and the licensed trade on the provisions in the Equality Act in respect of taxis and PHVs.

There can be no justification for unlawful discrimination and it is therefore imperative that allegations of refusal are reported to ensure they can be fully investigated and appropriate action taken against the driver or operator concerned.

Local licensing authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting offences of this nature and I am aware of a number of cases where local authorities have successfully prosecuted licensed drivers resulting in significant penalties. Licensing authorities may also consider suspending or revoking the licences of drivers and operators who discriminate in this way.

Sentencing guidelines are a matter for the independent Sentencing Council. Guidelines do not cover all offences but there are general guidelines covering the assessment of seriousness. Magistrates' guidelines also include a framework for determining the appropriate level of fines in individual cases, taking account of the seriousness of the offence and the means of the offender.

Thank you again for bringing these important issues to my attention and let me confirm once more that any discrimination is not acceptable.

Yours,



ANDREW JONES